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# PROGRESS

## UNDER THE AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM

(Highlights of 1966)

The 1966 Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) stressed the establishment of grass, trees, and legume cover on farmland. Long-term protective cover was encouraged to help protect land that is subject to damage through erosion. The program helped farmers shift land to less intensive uses, or helped them maintain it in such uses.

Emphasis was given to helping low-income farmers carry out needed conservation practices on their farmland.

Multi-purpose practices were emphasized—for example, conservation practices which help beautify the countryside and upgrade the “quality of life” and make the entire rural community more attractive as a place to live.

### SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM

More than a million U. S. farmers and ranchers used ACP cost-share assistance to install needed conservation measures on their farmland. About 200,000 new participants were enrolled in the program—those who had never used ACP cost-share assistance, at least not for 5 years.

The 1966 program was operated at a level of \$220 million, excluding administrative costs, as directed by the U. S. Congress.

In addition, \$11,176,500 of special funds were allocated to 339 counties in 33 States for emergency assistance for farmlands damaged by flood, drought, tornado, range fires, windstorm, and earthquake.

### SOLVING COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PROBLEMS

Farmer-elected Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation county and community committeemen administered the ACP locally. They continued their efforts to show non-participating landowners as well as farmers the benefits of conservation farming. They identified community-wide conservation problems in a systematic manner so that such problems could be treated on a special-project basis.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service

ACP Special Projects is a recent development in the program designed to cope with conservation problems of a community-wide nature which involve nonfarm as well as farm people. Through a cooperative effort, these groups can come to grips with the problem, with ACP and farmers sharing the cost of dealing with that part of the problem which affects farmland for which the farmers are responsible.

As another means of solving community conservation problems, ASC committees provided ACP cost-share funds to accelerate the conservation programs of other agencies and groups where individual farmers and ranchers were required to carry out needed conservation on privately owned land as part of the overall project. For example, ACP:

- provided about \$3.7 million in cost-share funds for 2,633 multiple-farm pooling agreements.
- invested about \$12.5 million in cost-sharing with 70,000 farm families to carry out land treatment measures required in Public Law 566 watershed program areas.
- invested about \$11.5 million in other organized watershed program areas.
- provided about \$5.7 million of cost-share funds in 20 resource conservation and development project areas and 12 rural renewal program counties.

## HOW THE ACP IS DEVELOPED . . .

Each year the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation committees develop the Agricultural Conservation Program at the State and county levels. They do this jointly with the Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service, and with the assistance of other interested groups, including the Cooperative Extension Service, Farmers Home Administration, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, representatives of other State and local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in agricultural conservation.

## . . . AND OPERATED

The responsibility of ASC committees does not end with the development of the annual ACP. They plan and direct its operations throughout the year. Also, ASC community committeemen personally encourage their neighbors to undertake needed conservation work. These local farmer-committeemen help identify community-wide conservation problems that can be solved through special projects.

## MEETING SPECIAL PROBLEMS WITH ACP

*Water Conservation:* In addition to ACP cost-share funds made available in organized watershed program areas, ACP helped farmers and ranchers make the best use of

available water supplies, reduce siltation, and conserve water resources.

For instance, in adjoining counties in Wyoming and Utah, an irrigation water reservoir was completed along the Bear River with ACP assistance. It culminated a project started nearly 25 years ago to provide water storage so that ranchers would have adequate water supplies during the dry summer months. A series of small reservoirs hold back spring runoff from the mountain area and impound it for summer use. Most ranchers participating in the project estimate the additional water will double their hay crops and provide enough regrowth to fall-pasture livestock. In addition, Bear River is not allowed to dry up as it once did. Fish are kept alive. Sportsmen gain from these reservoirs, which are stocked and open to the public. Also geese have started using the reservoirs during their fall migration. Hunting is possible now where geese have not been stopping before.

*Water Pollution:* ACP cost-sharing helps farmers apply conservation measures that reduce the sources of water pollution.

Flooding and wave action on Wolf River in northeastern Wisconsin have caused serious erosion of bordering farmland. Lake Winnebago is being polluted due to this siltation effect. ASC committees from five counties agreed on an ACP Special Project to help farmers protect farmland along the river through sharing with them the costs of streambank stabilization through rip-rapping, constructing shallow ponds to create still water, and building wildlife ponds. In 1966 alone, 86 farmers rip-rapped 9 miles of stream banks, 73 farmers built shallow ditches, and 108 farmers put in wildlife ponds. Large acreages of vegetative cover were established in the area to make further fundamental contribution to water pollution control.

*Assistance to Low-Income Farmers:* The emphasis on using ACP cost-sharing to help small farms where the farmer does not have the resources to pay his share of the cost of needed conservation under the normal program has helped solve some difficult community conservation problems.

In one county in Ohio, 23 farmers who for economic reasons had been planting row crops on their hilly land were encouraged and helped to develop more grassland through an ACP Special Project. As a result, 492 acres of this land were converted from row crops to permanent vegetation; an additional 740 acres of permanent cover were established and 108 acres were improved; 10 farm ponds were built, and sod waterways were established to reduce erosion and downstream pollution.

These farmers attended a farm management school conducted under the Manpower Development and Training Act. Each has developed a soil conservation district farm plan; their incomes have risen.

*Wildlife Conservation:* ACP increasingly worked with sportsmen and State wildlife agencies in getting farmers to establish wildlife conservation practices on private land.

Wildlife practices cost-shared under the ACP include such measures as planting of trees and shrubs for food and protection, creating wet land areas for use as nesting places for waterfowl, planting wildlife food plots, and building fish ponds.

In some localities, sportsmen's organizations help farmers pay a share of the cost. They also help stock game birds or fish where improvements have been made.

*Beautification Through Conservation:* A relatively small, but significant portion of ACP cost-shares was used for practices which in addition to conserving natural resources also beautify the countryside.

In several counties in northeastern Washington State, owners of heavily wooded farmland improved their stands of timber along public highways, including removal of undesirable underbrush along the right-of-way.

This kind of work reduces fire hazards, improves the quality of timber, gives trees a better chance to grow. At the same time it opens up vistas to motorists, and provides safety features due to better visibility and more open space.

## MAJOR FARMER ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER THE 1966 ACP

- 50,000 water storage reservoirs constructed to distribute grazing, control erosion, and conserve irrigation water or provide wildlife habitat.
- 734,000 acres terraced to control erosion or conserve water.
- 345,000 acres devoted to the establishment of strip-cropping systems to control wind or water erosion and conserve water.
- 43,000 acres where permanent sod waterways were established to control erosion and permit safe disposal of excess runoff.
- 12,708,000 acres on which an enduring vegetative cover was established which will control erosion and conserve water.
- 200,000 acres planted to trees for forestry purposes.
- 210,000 acres of low quality forested areas improved so as to develop into a desirable forest resource.

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